Teacher and Principal Evaluation

"Influencing Transformation"

Communication #24

February 28, 2014

Quality Control Edition

Sphere One Outcome

By the end of Sphere One, leadership personnel should know and be able to conduct beginning of the year pre-evaluation conferences that include reporting the teacher's or principal's MSA translation scores, the setting of teacher or principal SLOs, and a basic understanding of how to construct three year-cohorts, and plan the evaluation workload for the 2013-2014 school year.

Confidence Level

Based on information gathered during the February 5 Quality Control Webinar, 80% of respondents now indicate "increasingly confident" and "fully confident" levels of accomplishment of the Sphere One Outcomes and no respondent indicated a level of "no confidence."

Sphere Two Outcome

By the end of Sphere Two, leadership personnel should know and be able to effectively establish goals and expectations for purposeful school visits, organize a work plan to reflect the strengths and needs of individual principals and their schools, and implement and monitor SLOs through the connection of the SLO to the observable evidence of effective professional practice criteria.

Confidence Level

Based on information gathered during the February 5 Quality Control Webinar, 80% of respondents now indicate "increasingly confident" and "fully confident" levels of accomplishment of the Sphere Two Outcomes and no respondent indicated a level of "no confidence."

Sphere Three Outcome

By the end of Sphere Three, leadership personnel should know and be able to maintain the annual evaluative workload to conduct mid-year conferences and monitor SLO progress.

Confidence Level

Based on information gathered during the February 5 Quality Control Webinar, 83% of respondents indicated "increasingly confident" and "fully confident" levels of accomplishment of the Sphere Three Outcomes and no respondent indicated a level of "no confidence" in proceeding with Sphere Four.

Refinements

Based on information gathered during the February 5, 2014 Quality Control Webinar, Sphere Four Technical Assistance and Professional Development trainings will include increased focus on:

1. Assisting evaluators to manage the evaluation process workload
2. Assisting LEAs to facilitate TPE communications

Sphere Four Outcomes

By the end of Sphere Four, leadership personnel should know and be able to attribute students to teachers and principals and to score the component pieces of the teacher and principal evaluations. They should also know and be able to conduct the end of the year evaluation conference and set professional practice goals for educators receiving a full evaluation.

March Pulse Checks…

   …have purposeful visits been made to schools to observe principals?
   …have 65% or more of teacher observations been conducted?
…are evidence and/or artifacts being collected to support the evaluation of professional practice?
…are teachers' and principals' SLOs being monitored?
…have all mid-year conferences been completed with principals and teachers?
…are teachers' and principals' goals being revised, reinforced, or revisited as a result of mid-year conferences?
…are end-of-year conferences being scheduled for teachers and principals?

Sphere Three Quality Control

Recall that the Teacher Principal Evaluation (TPE) work for School Year 2013-14 is organized around a series of "Spheres of Influence" which are designed to focus the critical work on those roles that have responsibility to move training and activities in the LEAs. The required outcome for the year is that every covered educator in the State must receive an evaluation of highly effective, effective, or ineffective using a qualifying evaluation model. All 22 Race to the Top (RTTT) LEAs have approved local models.

As part of the Sphere of Influence design, each Sphere concludes with a Quality Control Session. The Quality Control Panel includes a person in leadership from all 24 LEAs and also representation from the following professional associations: The Maryland State Education Association (MSEA), the Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP), the Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP), and the Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM). The Quality Control Session for Spheres One and Two was held on October 30, 2013. A major outcome of the October 30, 2013 session was the identification of needed refinements, which led to specific actions. These refinements were:

- Management of data and evaluation elements associated with SLOs
- Alignment of SLOs with the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards to improve teacher performance
- Capacity of principals to conduct the work associated with TPE
- Validation of communication strategies

These identified refinements yielded a series of MSDE-led activities, which included a full day eConference to focus on LEA-developed solutions to manage the SLO workload. There were expanded trainings with specific focus on SLOs, Executive Officers summits, PD coordinators' meetings, and a Principals' Advisory Group. There has been expansion of deeper communication materials directed at a growing distribution list, a large effort to present at numerous conferences, and an active engagement with the two principals' associations. Subsequent feedback from the February 5 Quality Control Webinar indicated that these refinement efforts had elevated the "increasingly" and "fully confident" levels that Sphere Two Outcomes had been accomplished to 96%.

With the benchmark that by the end of Sphere Three, leadership personnel should know and be able to maintain the annual evaluative workload to conduct mid-year conferences and monitor SLO progress, the Quality Control Webinar for Sphere Three was conducted on February 5, 2014. Data were received from the 25 representative organizations and LEAs. The discussion of Sphere Three Refinements continued to indicate concern over the ability of principals to manage the work load needed to execute the quantity of meetings and SLO reviews required by local TPE models. The final portion of the Webinar involved a series of updates on the ESEA extension, waivers, amendments, transition plan, and no-cost extension plans for school year 2014-15.

The post webinar poll was designed to be as close to the prior poll as possible to allow a comparison from October data to February data. Table 1 displays LEAs' responses to the poll, sorted with the most strongly positive responses to the top. For each question, LEAs were asked if in any category they were "fully confident", "increasingly confident," "somewhat confident," or "not confident."

Table 1

How confident are you in the readiness of your district to maintain the workload to ensure conferences have been held & SLOs have been reviewed?	How confident are you that the refinements & training in Sphere 3 has positioned executive officers & principals to better conduct the work around evaluations?	How confident are you that the refinements & training in Sphere 3 positioned professional development staff & teachers to advance & conclude the work around SLOs for this year?	How confident are you that your communications are reaching intended audiences?	Your LEA's or representative group's overall confidence that Sphere Three Outcomes have been accomplished?	To what degree do you feel confident with TPE proceeding with Sphere Four Evaluation Activities?
Fully	Fully	Fully	Fully	Fully	Fully
Fully	Increasingly	Fully	Fully	Fully	Fully
Increasingly	Fully	Fully	Fully	Fully	Fully
Fully	Fully	Fully	Increasingly	Fully	Fully
Fully	Fully	Fully	Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly
Fully	Increasingly	Increasingly	Fully	Increasingly	Fully
Fully	Increasingly	Fully	Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly
Increasingly	Fully	Increasingly	Fully	Increasingly	Increasingly
Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly	Fully	Increasingly	Fully
Fully	Increasingly	Fully	Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly
Fully	Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly
Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly	Fully	Increasingly	Increasingly
Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly
Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly
Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly
Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly	Somewhat	Increasingly	Increasingly
Increasingly	Increasingly	Somewhat	Increasingly	Increasingly	Increasingly
Somewhat	Increasingly	increasingly	increasingly	increasingly	increasingly
Somewhat	Fully	Fully	Somewhat	Somewhat	Somewhat
Increasingly	Increasingly	Somewhat	Increasingly	Somewhat	Increasingly
Somewhat	Increasingly	Somewhat	Increasingly	Increasingly	Somewhat
Not	Increasingly	Increasingly	Somewhat	Somewhat	Somewhat
Somewhat	Somewhat	Increasingly	Not	Somewhat	Somewhat

The same data are again displayed in the Figure 1, but aggregated across the respondents using stacked bars. The data strongly suggest that Sphere Three activities prepared executive officers and principals ("leaders") for evaluations. Almost as positive, LEAs perceive that teachers are prepared to complete SLOs.

Figure 1
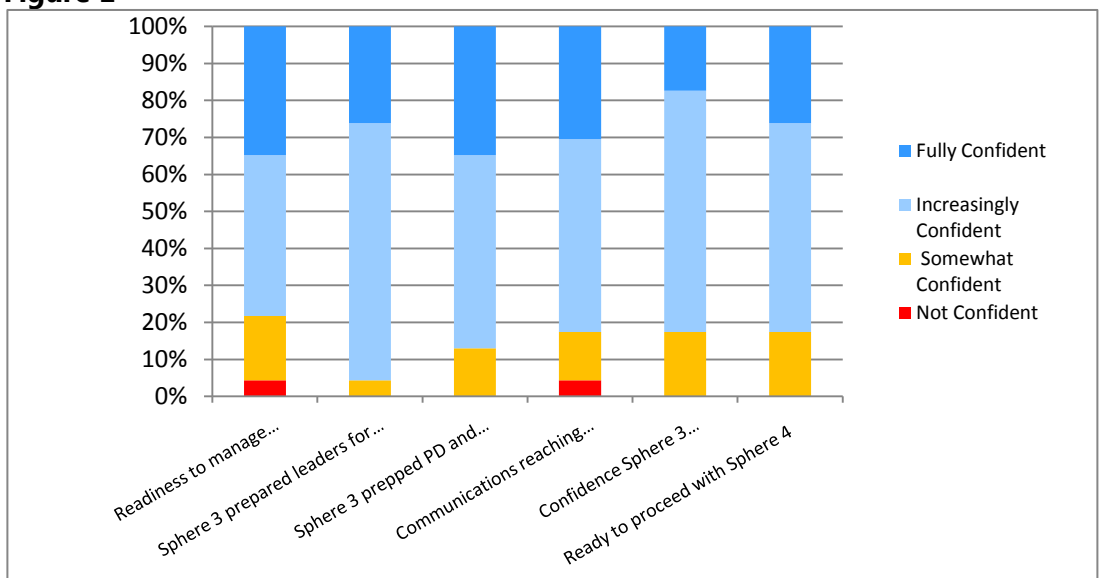
As in October, there are some LEAs that are progressing and a number that are well advanced in handling the work of TPE, however the two areas of interest identified from the Sphere Three Webinar were the ability to manage the magnitude of SLO conferences and the success with which communications reach intended audiences.

Figure 2 compares the poll questions from October 30, 2013 to those from February 5, 2014. In every category, LEA data are more confident than reported three months earlier. In particular, at the end of October, only 62% of 24 reporting LEAs indicated readiness to undertake Sphere Three tasks. However, by February, 83% of LEAs indicate readiness to undertake Sphere Four tasks.

Figure 2
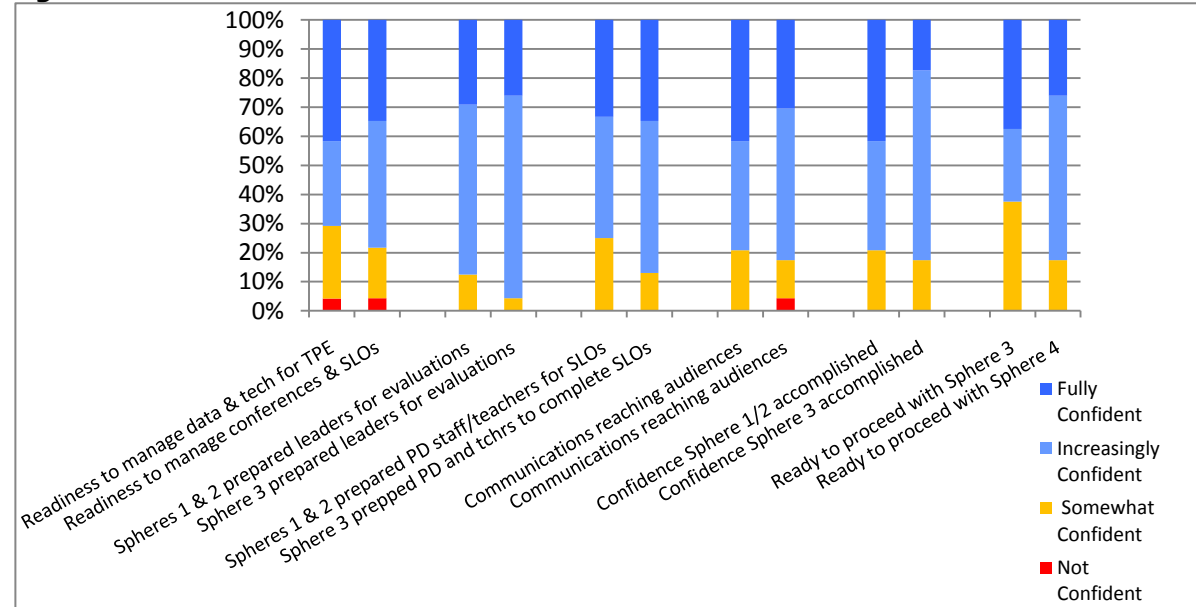
While confidence levels continue to increase, it appears that continued work is needed to assist LEAs in finding ways to streamline Teacher and Principal Evaluation processes. This exploration will be best realized through increased efficiencies in using technology and simplification of evaluation models. While a great deal of local autonomy is afforded, it important to recall that the State's guidance remains that LEAs limit the number of SLOs to two during these initial years and that at least one of the SLOs be district or school specific. This guidance significantly reduces the need for constructing multiple original or unique SLOs for every teacher and provides some level of district consistency and efficiency for a substantial part of the evaluation workload. The State also suggests caution in the selection of evaluation tools or products that require time and resources that exceed the operational capacity of the district. While such evaluative solutions may offer an array of rubrics, matrices, methodologies, and correctives, their collective intensity may greatly strain the ability of evaluators to execute quality evaluations within the annual timeframe. The State believes that combining limited SLOs and streamlined evaluation processes within the three-year evaluation cohort cycle, has the greatest immediate potential for managing the workload of TPE. This conversation will be continued as we provide professional development and direction to Executive Officers.

ESEA Waiver Extension

In seeking an extension to Maryland's ESEA Flexibility Waiver, MSDE considered how to concurrently satisfy concrete expectations within the one-year ESEA Extension allowance and intended expectations for TPE beyond the Extension. In doing so, both USDE and Maryland recognize unknowns that will continue to emerge and be resolved over the next three years. Foremost among these are confidences and proficiencies with Student Learning Objectives as a student growth measure, confidences in the translation and attribution of the PARCC Assessments into student growth measures, and confidences associated with the ability of principals to plan and manage teacher evaluation processes that result in fair effectiveness ratings and effective professional development. All of these must be navigated within Maryland's continued commitment to teacher and principal evaluation that reflects a 50% measure of Professional Practice and a 50% measure of Student Growth; including a 20% application of Student Growth that is attributed to state tests.

From inception, it was recognized that the transition to the PARCC Assessments would create a two year hiatus on student growth measures attributed to State testing and this disruption in data would require an interim solution for applying student growth to educator effectiveness. It is further recognized that a great deal of practice, discovery, and learning must still occur to shepherd SLOs to fully effective operational status. While on-going instructional awareness and practice will build ever-increasing alignments between the Maryland Career and College-Ready Standards and the PARCC Assessments, unknowns remain in regard to the resulting construct and conduct of the assessments.

To reaffirm Maryland's commitment to TPE and to satisfy USDE's conditions for ESEA Flexibility Waiver Extension, Maryland has submitted a "Plan for Transitioning Teacher Evaluation from MSA to PARCC Assessments." SY 2013-14 and SY 2014-15 demonstrate the one-year extension terms of Maryland's current Flexibility Waiver and includes allowance for not using State test-associated measures in making personnel decisions. It is understood, that test measures from SY 2014-15 will serve as baseline data and that subsequent data from SY 2015-16 will facilitate the norming of the test measures in SY 2016-17. Similar norming will occur annually as additional test data is acquired and analyzed. Annual analysis will further support the review and reconsideration of component measures and values within State and local evaluation models. The combined impact of the waiver extension and its amendments binds MSDE through SY 2014-15; while the architecture within the Transition Plan demonstrates Maryland's intentions beyond the Waiver Extension and pending any forthcoming offer of ESEA Renewal.

The State believes that the Transition Plan will meet the criteria of full implementation and benefit TPE as follows:

- Provide a substitute methodology for capturing Student Growth during the two-year period when MSA expires and PARCC matures
- Provide a three year period for refining the application of and increasing confidence in SLOs as a measure of student growth in the evaluation process
- Provide a three year period for principals and LEAs to develop and refine strategies to effectively manage the capacity requirements of the evaluation components
- Provide an annual timeframe for the analysis and validation of TPE data and methodologies

Maryland's intentions, as evidenced in the amended Maryland Models for Teacher and Principal Evaluation, incorporate changes resulting from the 2013 Statewide Field Test in conjunction with the Plan for Transition, accommodate the two Waivers offered by USDE in June 2013, and facilitate annual adjustments to TPE as unknowns become known.

MSDE has requested that USDE approve amending and extending the current ESEA Waiver for an additional year to reflect the following:

	SY 2013-2014	SY 2014-2015
50%	Professional Practice *Four Component measures* 1. *Planning & Preparation* 2. *Instruction* 3. *Classroom Environment* 4. *Professional Responsibilities* *(Counts for personnel decisions)*	Professional Practice *Four Component measures* 1. *Planning & Preparation* 2. *Instruction* 3. *Classroom Environment* 4. *Professional Responsibilities* *(Counts for personnel decisions)*
30%	Student Growth • *One or more SLO* • *Approved Local measures* *(Counts for personnel decisions)*	Student Growth • *One or more SLO* • *Approved Local measures* *(Counts for personnel decisions)*
20%	• *Translation of 2013 MSA assessments to a growth measure by applying MTAI in Sept 2013 for application to spring 2014 evaluations.* *(Does not count for personnel decisions)*	• *Use of 2014 MSA assessments to inform district or school level SLO for application to Spring 2015 evaluations* *(Informs personnel decisions)*

The approval of this amendment further increases model alignments and brings all 22 Local Education Agencies into compliance with the state model frameworks, allowing the Maryland State Department of Education to focus the delivery of professional development and technical assistance to districts during the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years.

MSDE recognizes the immediate nature of this amendment within the greater Flexibility Waiver Extension request; particularly as it impacts local evaluation timelines that are occurring in March, April, and May. USDE has agreed to consider reviewing such time-sensitive amendments and providing direction with increased urgency.
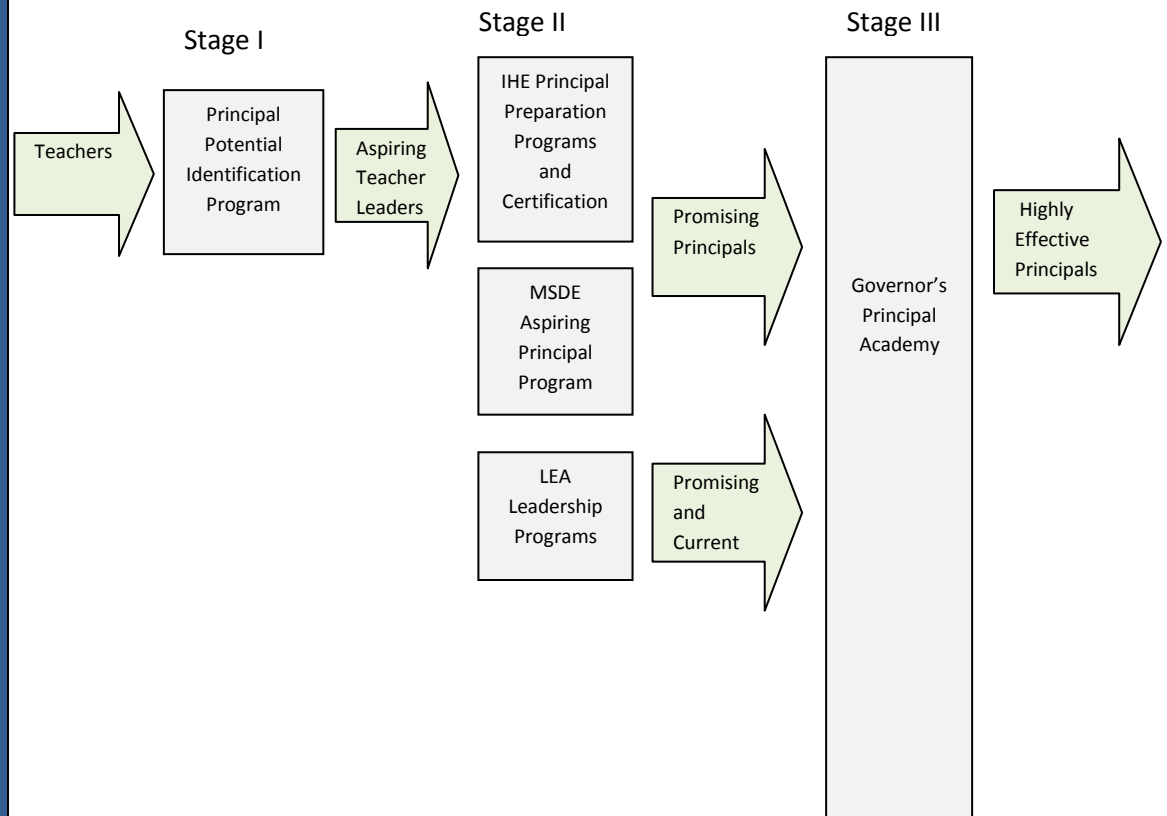
Sustainability: Principal Pipeline Initiative

As the current wave of Reform rolls on, the role of effective school leadership continues to emerge as critical to the accomplishment and sustainability of the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards, the PARCC Assessments, and Teacher and Principal Evaluation. As the skill sets necessary to organize school communities into evolving educational entities increases in complexity, the developmental needs of principals move to the forefront of the Reform agenda. The research repeatedly demonstrates that the principal is the key to an effective school and the national agenda is now gravitating towards this priority. Maryland's superintendents have identified a similar critical need, especially at the middle and high school levels. Recall that in the past, Maryland had a vibrant administrator program that existed in the form of the Maryland Assessment Center and the Maryland Professional Development Academy and over the last three years, Governor O'Malley has challenged MSDE to create a more contemporary version of a pipeline that would identify, nurture, and support the development of highly effective principals.

State Superintendent, Dr. Lillian M. Lowery has similarly embraced this vision – directing initial design work to commence and earmarking resources for the project. The goal of this initiative is to construct a sustainable spectrum that will include 1) the legitimate identification of promising school leaders; 2) the preparation, refreshment, and endorsement of promising school leaders and current school leaders to lead 21st century schools; and 3) the concurrent preparation and readiness of the supervisors of principals. The delivery of this work will be differentiated to meet the needs of all LEAs and universal to the contemporary practitioner skills required of principals. The Governor's Principal Academy will serve as the signature component of the Pipeline. This initiative represents the next chapter in the evolution of TPE and is viewed by MSDE as the means for sustaining the annual maintenance of this work for the foreseeable future. While at the formative level, the following graphic depicts the first three stages of the Principal Pipeline design.

Principal Pipeline Design Concept

Eventually, the Principal Pipeline Project will consist of 5 stages; the first three are depicted here.

Stage I   Stage II   Stage III

Teachers → Principal Potential Identification Program → Aspiring Teacher Leaders → IHE Principal Preparation Programs and Certification

MSDE Aspiring Principal Program → Promising Principals → Governor's Principal Academy → Highly Effective Principals

LEA Leadership Programs → Promising and Current

- Stage I is designed to identify individuals with the greatest potential to become school leaders and create cohorts of aspiring administrators and teacher leaders
- Stage II is designed to shepherd aspiring teacher leaders through State and local principal professional development and certification processes
- Stage III is designed to identify promising and current principals for inclusion in the Governor's Principal Academy. The Academy will be an annual experience designed around professional growth, networking, principal preparation, and refreshment.
- Stage IV will be designed to elevate the contemporary skill sets of individuals who supervise principals
- Stage V will be designed to maintain the LEAs capacity to maintain the supervision of principals

Year 4 Outcomes

It is beneficial to recall that the TPE Project has two major deliverables at the end of Year 4.

1. The first is that every principal and teacher covered by the Education Reform Act receives an evaluation of highly effective, effective, or ineffective using an approved qualifying TPE model. We agreed with superintendents that these ratings would be provided to MSDE by July 1, 2014.

2. The second is that enough data will be collected from the participating LEAs to inform a conversation whether the LEA and State TPE models are performing as designed: with objectivity, fairness, and accuracy. The models should be able to evidence discrimination within and across LEAs. This data will be gathered in June and July for analysis beginning in August 2014.

Data Collection Workgroup

TPE models will need to be able to demonstrate internal consistency; meaning that every element makes a contribution to the final rating but no single element makes a disproportionate contribution. Data do not need to be exhaustive, but data need to be sufficiently rich to allow LEAs to answer questions of interest to their stakeholders, to allow the State to understand the integrity of the overall work, and to satisfy USDE that LEAs are effectively administering quality evaluation systems. In January 2014, all interested LEAs were invited to join a Data Collection Work Group. The first meeting, held by conference call, laid out the parameters of the task and highlighted salient issues to be considered. Subsequent to that, a first draft of two data collection instruments – one for teachers and one for principals – was composed and placed into a standard format that would be used for any fixed field data collection from LEAs, the standard way of transferring data between LEAs and MSDE. On February 21, a convening was conducted that included representatives from nine LEAs; staff from the Division of Assessment, Accountability, and Data Systems; and representatives of the TPE Action Team and the Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center at WestEd. The charge of this work group was to define a data collection that will be uniform and comprehensive but allow each LEA to preserve and represent the uniqueness of their model. Among the topics discussed were the demographic elements to be captured, the precision with which grade or school type will be defined, and a flexible approach to reflect the percentage weight, maximum score, and earned score for each model element. This last topic is important because there are various scoring approaches among the LEAs; however, it will be necessary to normalize the data to support the research and evaluation questions that will occupy the summer of 2014 and will define model refinements moving forward.

Comprehensive Training Plan

Of the 54 RTTT projects, two dozen fall under a Comprehensive Training Plan (CTP). The goal of the CTP is to streamline training delivery, create useful enduring materials, and make resources easily accessible to diverse audiences. Development of the CTP commenced with an exploration of the who-what-where-when-why-how of the training. However, cutting across all projects are consistent functional skills needed to access training, to deliver training, and to exploit resources. Typical questions that surface in the projects are "How do I find resources I need?" "How can I take or give a training?" "How do I register for a course or get reimbursed for one?" These functional skills are closely linked with the instructional learning tools and platforms which undergird the trainings. Moreover, access to the critical skills is proving to be more powerful than merely knowing who does training or who should know about training.

On February 12, 2014, MSDE hosted a full day eConference. Brief descriptions of each session follow, including links to the actual webinars, which were recorded and archived. Our intent is to develop an electronic road map whereby internal and external project users can identify their interests and navigate the platforms to meet their needs. The majority of Maryland's LEAs participated in the webinars, and there was also a broad representation from the State's higher education community.

> **Session I: Critical Functional Skills**
> Session I https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/324678746
> Description: *A number of functional skills, such as facility with Blackboard or the Course Registration System, run as a common theme through many of the RTTT projects that fall under the Comprehensive Training Plan. This session is a high level overview of these skills.*

Session II: Instructional Tools and Platforms
Session II https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/403936474
Description: *The functional skills discussed in the prior session allow trainers and trainees to access and use the resources, content, and tools that are available on various platforms, most particularly the suite of materials on Blackboard Learn. This session will provide a live interactive demonstration of some of these resources.*

Session III: Overview of Projects
Session III https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/459581978
Description: *Almost two dozen projects fall under the Comprehensive Training Plan. These projects more often than not use the skills and tool that were the subjects of the morning's webinars. Each of the project managers will make a short presentation addressing the who/what/when/where/why and how of their project(s) through the lens of the skills and tools that support the project.*

The next step in the development of the CTP is to unify the body of consistent information gleaned from the projects into a concentrated and dynamic locus. Below is an example of how a single project will appear. All the hyperlinks are live and go directly to actual training resources. The eventual posting will include hyperlinks to the names and email addresses of the MSDE staff member(s) responsible for the project.

Line Item Project Sample

Project #/ Project Name	Project Goal	Audience / Know-USE				Content Area: - Administration - Assessment - Curriculum - Evaluation - Infrastructure - Instruction - Reporting	Resources
		Superintendents	Executive Officers	School-based Supervisors	Teachers		
26-43: Implement a system to support E-Learning for Instructional Intervention Enhancement, and Enrichment	Provides teachers in the classroom with education delivery options that enable them to provide individual instructional interventions to students to improve learning. (minutes 25)	K	K	K/ U	K/ U	Instruction	• Overview of functional skills • Blackboard Live Demo • Blackboard Learn • Blackboard Help • MSDE Blackboard Login Instructions Guide • Blackboard Tutorial

Explanation of Column Headings:

Project #/Name – the numbers assigned to each project by USDE and MSDE/the official name of the project, per Maryland's Race to the Top program

Project Goal – a description of what the project is intended to do, hyperlinked to a project overview webinar that should be viewed and the minute (listed) to view each project

Audiences/Know-USE – which of the below listed audiences need to **know about (K)** and/or **be able to use (U)** the deliverables of this project

Content Area – which of the below listed content areas does the project support

Resources – links to additional tools, information, and materials related to the project

It is important to note that the actual projects are at different developmental and operational stages. Therefore subsequent dashboards, project unique trainings, and project content may be at various stages of availability on any particular date. By July 1, 2014, we hope to have all projects under the CTP in a comparable state of completeness for all intended users. Additional resources will be loaded, including melding this project with the 36 dashboards. The tool will become more refined in appearance, will have a permanent location readily accessible to stakeholders, and will have additional searching functionalities, e.g., searching out all projects that support Executive Officers with Instruction-focused projects.

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) Partnership

MSDE is partnering with the Maryland State Education Association (MSEA) on a grant from the National Education Association (NEA) to strengthen teachers' awareness and ability to use SLOs to support their professional development. NEA is conducting a national convening on SLOs on April 14-17, 2014. MSDE looks forward to working with MSEA on this topic and to the collaboration that will lead to assisting teachers and principals to employ SLOs as an effective measure of student performance.

New SLO Resources

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) Training Videos: MSDE recently completed four informational videos that focus on Student Learning Objectives. Dr. Linda Burgee, former Superintendent of Frederick County Schools and MSDE's RTTT liaison to local school systems, describes Student Learning Objectives in a special four-part video series. Over the past two years, Dr. Burgee has been working side-by-side with local school system staff and educators to provide guidance and training on how to use SLOs. The videos (available in two formats below – QuickTime and Windows Media) are short segments that provide key points to help guide principals and teachers through the SLO process.

Part I – **Introduction to SLOs** – available at
http://media.msde.state.md.us/2014/SLO/INTRO.mov and
http://media.msde.state.md.us/2014/SLO/INTRO.wmv

Part II – **The Process** – available at
http://media.msde.state.md.us/2014/SLO/PROCESS.mov and
http://media.msde.state.md.us/2014/SLO/PROCESS.wmv

Part III - **The Benefits** – available at
http://media.msde.state.md.us/2014/SLO/BENEFITS.mov and
http://media.msde.state.md.us/2014/SLO/BENEFITS.wmv

Part IV – **The Quality** – available at
http://media.msde.state.md.us/2014/SLO/QUALITY.mov and
http://media.msde.state.md.us/2014/SLO/QUALITY.wmv

Executive Officers Summit 4:

The next Summit will occur on March 14, 2014 and will continue the timely preparation for the next phase of the TPE process. Executive Officers will work together in order to be more prepared to hold an end-of-year evaluation process as well as to determine a final evaluation rating for their principals. In addition, Executive Officers will be able to self-assess their confidence in terms of what has been done in the TPE process and what will need to be done in the coming months.

On April 1, 2014, a representative from Achieve the Core will present to Executive Officers on the use of their Instructional Practice Guides. These guides provide concrete examples of what the Core Actions for implementing the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards for English Language Arts/ Literacy and Mathematics, by grade bands, looks like in planning and practice. It is intended to help teachers and those who support teachers build understanding of the standards and strengthen practice. This convening will give Executive Officers tools to share with principals to increase their capacity to observe the shifts that should be occurring in the classrooms. This can help support the TPE process and drive instructional leadership and teacher performance.

Professional Development (PD) Coordinators Meeting

The TPE Team met with the professional development coordinators on February 10, 2014 to update them on the Executive Officer Summits and to provide opportunities for them to reflect on and revise local TPE professional development plans. Feedback indicated that the Professional Development Coordinators benefited working collaboratively with their colleagues from like-size LEAs.

We continue to provide on-site technical assistance on the TPE process to LEAs.

Communications

**2/28/14 Assistant
 Superintendents**

3/7/14 PSSAM

**3/24/14 Communications
 Bulletin #25 ***

**5/5/14 Communication
 Bulletin #26**

Laura Motel
lmotel@msde.state.md.us

Response to Quality Control Communication Needs

The TPE Team will be working with LEAs that indicated on the last Quality Control Webinar poll that they needed assistance to help ensure that their TPE-related communications are reaching intended audiences. If you feel this is an area where your LEA would also like assistance, regardless of the LEA's response on the poll, feel free to contact any member of the TPE Action Team for individualized support.

Outreach

In addition to the regular scheduled Sphere activities, the TPE Team will be engaging the following stakeholder audiences over the coming months:

•	March 5	MAAC@WestEd Work Day
•	March 7	Public Schools Superintendents Association of Maryland
•	March 12	ISLLC Standards Webinar
•	March 21-22	Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals Conference
•	April 1	Achieve The Core Convening For Executive Officers
•	April 2	SoMIRAC Conference Panel Discussion
•	April 3	Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals Conference
•	April 4	Public Schools Superintendents Association of Maryland
•	April14-17	Maryland State Education Association SLO Conference

Annual USDE RTTT Visit & Review

During the week of February 24, 2014, officials from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) visited Maryland for its annual Race to the Top (RTTT) on-site review. USDE's primary objectives during the four-day visit were to examine the State's implementation of its RTTT reform plan, its progress toward achieving the goals described in that plan, and its oversight and support of participating Local Educational Agencies (LEAs). MSDE and USDE also discussed the State's plans for sustaining certain projects and reform initiatives after the RTTT grant period ends.

Two days of the visit were spent reviewing each of Maryland's 54 RTTT projects with State RTTT leadership and individual project managers. On the other two days, USDE visited three participating

LEAs (Cecil County, Baltimore City, and Washington County) to assess the impact of Maryland's RTTT reforms on instruction and student outcomes in schools and classrooms, and to discuss the State's management of the quality and progress of local implementation.

The on-site program review is one of several steps in an ongoing review process for all RTTT-winning states. USDE will use the information gathered during the on-site review to create a state-specific report about Maryland's progress and t inform a broader, national RTTT performance report.

New Communication Resources

Top 5 Things You Need to Know about Testing in High School
This one-page handout provides information on the testing that high school students will experience this spring, specifically the High School Assessments and Field Test of the PARCC assessments.

This handout can be found at: http://www.msde.state.md.us/w/Top5HSTesting0214.pdf
It is also available in Spanish: http://www.msde.state.md.us/w/Top5HSTesting0214SP.pdf.

Top 10 Things Parents Need to Know about Testing in Maryland
In order to alleviate concerns and provide accurate information, MSDE worked with a group of parents to develop this new flyer, Top 10 Things Parents Need to Know about Testing in Maryland. We hope that this handout will assist in efforts to keep parents informed about testing this spring.

This handout can be found at: http://www.msde.state.md.us/w/Top10TestingMD2014.pdf

Maryland Classroom, March 2014 – Top 10 Things all Maryland Teachers Need to Know about the PARCC Assessments and 2014 Field Test
Maryland Classroom is the educator newsletter that has been the key channel for communicating important school reform information to local board members, central office, and school-based staff for over 18 years. The March 2014 issue focuses on the Top 10 Things all Maryland Teachers Need to Know about the PARCC Assessments and 2014 Field Test and includes information about the development of the PARCC assessments, the purpose of the Field Test, what the assessments will look like when they are fully implemented next year, and how teachers are being prepared. This issue also includes numerous links to additional resources, including sample test items and tutorials, allowing teachers, students, parents, and others to experience the types of test questions and computer-based tools (such as drag-and-drop, multiple select, text highlighting, and an equation builder) that students will use when taking PARCC.

The March 2014 issue of Maryland Classroom can be found at:
http://www.msde.state.md.us/mdclassroom/Vol19_No2_032014.pdf

From the Newsroom:

Maryland Requests ESEA Waiver Extension For Teacher-Principal Evaluations
MSDE Asking U.S. Department of Education for More Time to Implement New Initiatives Well
February 25, 2014, http://marylandpublicschools.org/press/02_25_2014.html

Maryland Receives ESEA Waiver Approval from U.S. Department Of Education
Flexibility Granted to Avoid Double-Testing; No Federal Sanctions with PARCC Field Test
February 14, 2014, http://marylandpublicschools.org/press/02_14_2014.html

State Official to Lead National Panel on Principal Evaluator Standards
Volrath's Efforts Will Be On Behalf Of Nation's Education Chiefs
January 8, 2014, http://marylandpublicschools.org/press/01_08_2014.html